News From the Wyoming Department of Health

Wednesday, April 12, 2006

West Nile Virus: It's Not Too Early to Take Precautions

CHEYENNE - As warmer weather approaches, officials from the Wyoming Department of Health are reminding people to take precautions against West Nile virus.

West Nile virus (WNV) is a mosquito-borne disease that can cause a potentially serious illness in humans. Mosquitoes spread this virus after they feed on infected birds and then bite people, other birds and animals.

While most human WNV infections in Wyoming occur in late summer and early fall, humans can become infected with the virus much earlier in the season. "It's not too early to start preventing mosquito breeding on your property and to start taking precautions to prevent mosquito bites, especially as the weather warms up," said Terry Creekmore, West Nile virus surveillance coordinator.

Creekmore noted that the Wyoming Legislature recently approved continued funding for the Emergency Insect Management Program. "This state-sponsored program basically doubles the capability of participating jurisdictions to control mosquitoes and problem grasshoppers," Creekmore said.

The program currently has more than \$900,000 available, and the 2005 legislature appropriated another \$1.9 million for the next biennium. Applications for matching grants are available at the Wyoming Department of Agriculture's website at http://wyagric.state.wy.us or interested parties may contact Slade Franklin at (307) 777-6585.

The "5 D's" of preventing West Nile Virus are:

- 1) DAWN and 2) DUSK Most mosquito species prefer to feed at dawn or dusk, so to reduce your chance of being bitten, you should avoid spending time outside during these times.
- 3) DRESS Wear shoes, socks, long pants, and a long-sleeved shirt when spending time outdoors or when mosquitoes are most active. Clothing should be light-colored and made of tightly woven materials to keep mosquitoes away from the skin.
- 4) DRAIN Mosquitos breed in shallow, stagnant water. Reduce the amount of standing water in or near your property by draining and/or removing it.
- 5) DEET Use an insect repellent containing DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide). Products containing DEET should be used properly. When using DEET, be sure to read and follow the instructions on the product's label. Avoid excessive use or over-application. In most circumstances, products with 10 to 35 percent DEET provide adequate protection for adults. Spray clothing with repellents containing permethrin or DEET because mosquitoes can bite through thin clothing. Permethrin should not be used on bare skin.

(The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has stated that another insect repellent, Picaridin (KBR 3023), is also highly effective. Two other scientific studies have also suggested that oil of lemon eucalyptus, a plant based repellent, is also effective and provides protection similar to those products

containing low concentrations of DEET. While many new products have been shown to provide some protection against mosquito bites, DEET has been the most studied and reliable mosquito repellent for personal use. Product labels should be consulted to determine the length of time that protection can be expected from a product. More information about repellents and insecticides can be found on the National Pesticide Information Center's website at http://npic.orst.edu/index.html or at 1-800-858-7378.)

Property owners can also start reducing mosquito breeding grounds. Property owners should go through this checklist several times during the spring through the early fall.

- Use smart landscaping to eliminate standing water that collects on your property.
 - Repair failed septic tanks.
- Dispose of containers that collect water such as tin cans, ceramic pots, or plastic containers.
- Remove or discard old tires on your property used tires are very common mosquito breeding sites.
 - If you cannot dispose of old tires, drill holes in them to allow water to drain.
- For containers that must remain on your property such as bird baths, wading pools, or troughs, change the water at least once a week.
 - Repair leaky water pipes and outdoor faucets.
 - Ensure that your roof gutters are draining properly.
 - Turn over plastic wading pools and wheelbarrows when not in use.
 - Cover trash containers to keep water out.
 - Aerate ornamental ponds or stock them with predatory fish.
 - Clean and chlorinate outdoor swimming pools even when they are not in use.
- Keep drains, ditches, and culverts free of grass clippings, weeds, and trash so water will drain properly.
 - Remove vegetation and debris from the edge of ornamental ponds.

More information about West Nile virus can be found on the Wyoming Department of Health's "Bad Skeeter" website: www.badskeeter.org.

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